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LECTURE

INTRODUCTORY TO THE COURSE

ON

MATERIA MEDICA

AND

GENERAL THERAPEUTICS,

IN THE

JEFFERSON MEDICAL COLLEGE OF PHILADELPHIA.

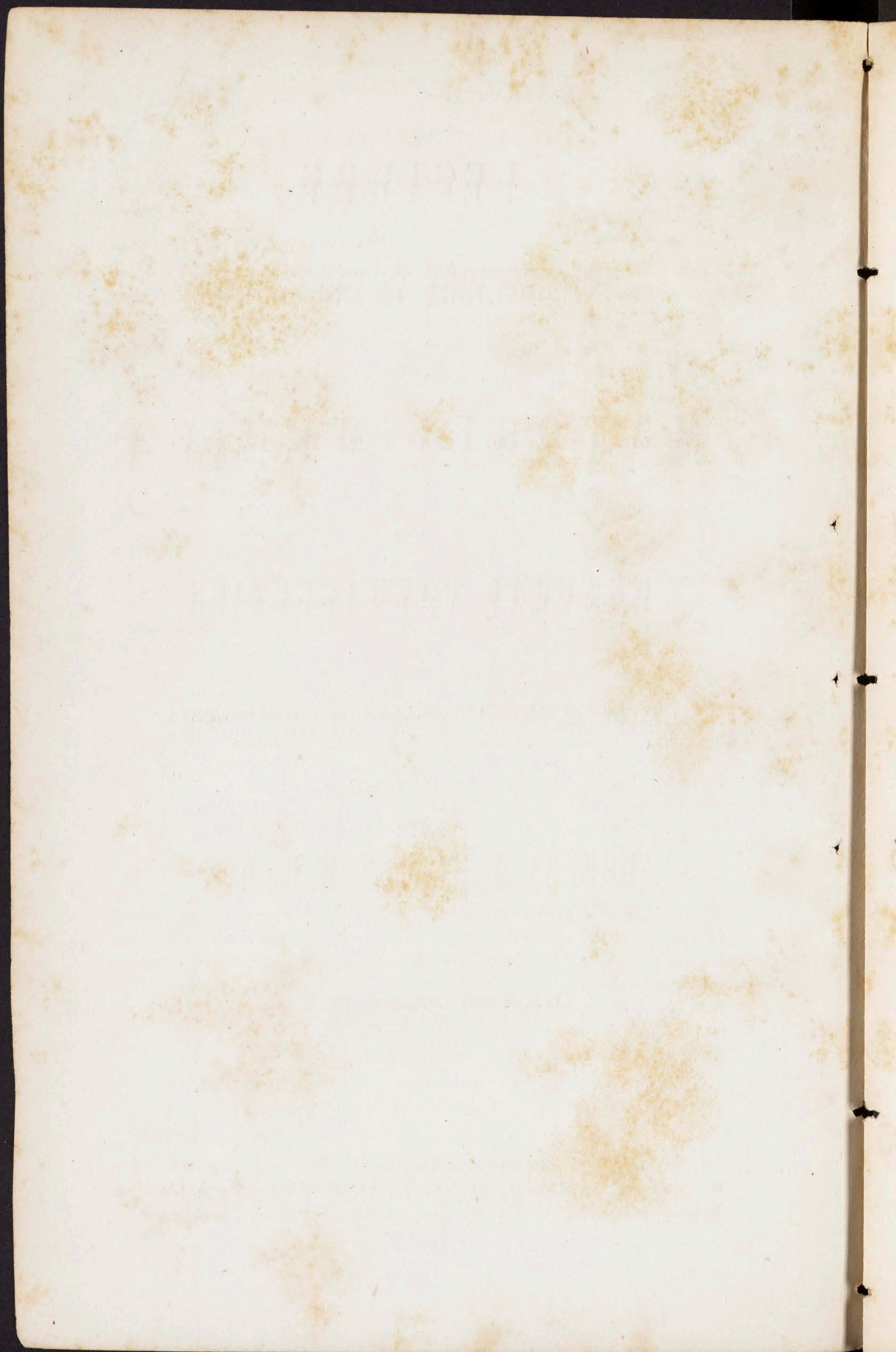
BY

ROBERT M. HUSTON, M.D., ETC.

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Delivered October 12, 1852.  
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## CORRESPONDENCE.

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PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 26, 1852.

SIR,—Appointed to address you by the Class of the Jefferson Medical College, we most respectfully solicit for publication, a copy of your Introductory Lecture, delivered at the commencement of the present session.

With the highest respect we remain your obedient servants,

R. W. RICHIE, M.D., <i>Ohio, Pres't.</i>	WILSON C. WHITAKER, <i>Florida.</i>
ELLERY P. SMITH, <i>N. Y., Sec.</i>	B. SCOTT HOPKINS, <i>Tennessee.</i>
THOS. H. BURNELL, <i>England, Treas.</i>	JAMES FARRELLY, <i>Mississippi.</i>
GEORGE F. JACKSON, <i>Maine.</i>	L. BEECHER TODD, <i>Kentucky.</i>
S. RANDOLPH MERRILL, <i>N. H.</i>	ANDREW J. STONER, <i>Illinois.</i>
E. H. BRINLEY, <i>Connecticut.</i>	SAMUEL D. McNUTT, <i>Indiana.</i>
CHARLES A. ROBERTSON, <i>Mass.</i>	CHARLES C. SHOYER, M.D., <i>Wisconsin.</i>
FRANCIS HERRMANN, <i>New Jersey.</i>	SAMUEL M. AXFORD, <i>Michigan.</i>
JOS. P. CHAMBERLAIN, <i>Delaware.</i>	JAMES P. EARICKSON, <i>Missouri.</i>
JAMES LAWS, <i>Pennsylvania.</i>	JOS. R. BROWN, M.D., <i>Texas.</i>
W. R. PARKER, <i>Virginia.</i>	MICHAEL LAVELL, <i>Canada.</i>
E. TUCKER BLAKE, <i>D. C.</i>	WM. F. HUMPHREY, <i>New Brunswick.</i>
JACOB E. REYNOLDS, <i>Maryland.</i>	JAMES L. CHIPMAN, <i>Nova Scotia.</i>
ANTHONY L. BITTING, <i>N. Carolina.</i>	JOHN W. NORRIS, <i>Newfoundland.</i>
JOHN S. WOLFF, <i>S. Carolina.</i>	E. A. CZAPKAY, <i>Hungary.</i>
THOMAS A. GRAVES, M.D., <i>Georgia.</i>	WM. GOODELL, Jr., <i>Turkey.</i>
THOMAS W. BOYETT, <i>Alabama.</i>	JOAQUIN PLANA, <i>Cuba.</i>

TO R. M. HUSTON, M.D.

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GIRARD STREET, Nov. 8, 1852.

GENTLEMEN,—I have received your note of the 26th ultimo, asking on behalf of the Class of Jefferson Medical College, for a copy of the Introductory Lecture I had the honor of delivering to them on the 12th inst. The topics discussed in the address, were presented for the serious consideration of the gentlemen composing the Class; and, although not designed for publication, if it is their wish to have my views on those subjects in a form for reference and future consultation, they have a right to be gratified. The manuscript will be handed to you, whenever called for.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully, &c.

R. M. HUSTON.

TO MESSRS. R. W. RICHIE, *President*, ELLERY P. SMITH, *Secretary*, THOS. W. BURNELL, *Treasurer*, and others, *Committee of the Class of Jefferson Medical College.*







## INTRODUCTORY LECTURE.

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GENTLEMEN:

They, whom pleasure or business has separated for a time from the endearments of home, know full well the feelings experienced by the wanderer, as he returns to the loved fireside; with what anxious gaze he beholds each familiar hill-top as it rises up in the distance, and with what animated steps he speeds forth along the oft-trodden path that leads to the spot where imagination already places before him the cherished objects of his affectionate regard. It is with emotions like these that I am agitated in approaching this rostrum; surrounded, as I am glad to perceive, by so many of my friends and pupils of the last and former sessions. To each of these, I tender the expression of my kindest remembrance!

Second only in pleasure to this delightful reunion is the anticipation of what we shall experience from an enlargement of the circle, by adding new friends—fresh recruits, as it were—to the ranks of our brotherhood! I am happy to observe many of this class present, for the first session, to add their names to the long roll that adorns the records of our favored Institution. To them, also, I offer a hearty—thrice hearty—welcome.

You are arrived, gentlemen, at a period of great interest—to you, to us, to the profession, and to the community. It is the season at which annually so many visit this Mecca of our profession, to devote themselves to the cause of science and humanity: the neophytes, to seek those efficient aids for gaining an extensive and accurate knowledge of the science and art of healing, which will enable them to become accomplished physicians and surgeons, and which are to be found only in large cities and well-appointed



schools ; and the veterans, too, many of whom are always present on these occasions, to burnish their armor and recruit their strength for future conflicts in the noble cause in which they are engaged.

Medical education is a subject of vast importance to the community, and one which should engage the attention of the people in a far greater degree than they are in general capable of appreciating ; for it concerns the health, and even the life, of each individual of every station in society. To the physician, however, it must ever possess an interest greater than to the common mind ; not because of professional pride, nor yet from his conscious liability in common with others to all "the ills that flesh is heir to," but from the many pleasing topics it presents for his contemplation, which others neither discern nor comprehend.

Within a few years past, as conducted in the United States, it has been the theme of much animated discussion, in societies, in journals and pamphlets, and even in the newspapers of the day. Much of what has appeared, it is true, has been little else than a reproduction of that which had previously gone forth. That not much light has been thrown upon the subject, or much good accomplished by these discussions, I think the most zealous will now admit. It could hardly, indeed, have been otherwise. In the essays on the subject, deemed most pertinent and original, too often we are presented with declamation where we should expect sound reasoning ; and random assertions and rhetorical flourishes, instead of argument and apt illustration. It is true, the sources from which, in many instances, these have proceeded, are not such as would lead us to expect suggestions derived from much personal experience, and we are, therefore, the less disappointed at the abortive results that have followed.

It has often been surprising to see gentlemen, who, from location or other circumstances, hold little intercourse with their brethren, and know scarcely anything of the actual condition of the medical schools, rise up and denounce the profession as degraded, the colleges as corrupt, and the system of instruction as imperfect and faulty, without appearing to reflect that those who constitute the profession they stigmatize are their peers, and that the modes of instruction, and organization of the colleges gene-



rally are far superior to what existed in the schools where they were educated twenty or thirty years ago. And yet, not one of these self-constituted judges, probably, doubts in the least that he is himself perfectly accomplished, although he cannot conceive that it is possible for others to be equally so who have enjoyed much greater opportunities. Is such a course just—is it creditable to those engaged in it?

At an early period in the history of the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Shippen held the chairs of Anatomy, Surgery, and Midwifery. How extensive were the lectures he gave on these branches, may be inferred from an anecdote related to me by the late excellent Professor James.

Dr. James, after his return from Edinburgh, where he had been to prosecute his studies, intending to devote himself especially to obstetrics, conceived the design of delivering a course of lectures on the subject to a private class of students. One day, after his course had been announced, he met Dr. Shippen in the street, who accosted him in his usual familiar way: "Well, James, so you are going to lecture on Midwifery?" "Yes, sir," said the modest youth; "I think of trying to do it." "*Ahem*," said Dr. Shippen. "How many lectures do you intend to give?" "About thirty, sir." "Thirty lectures on Midwifery!" exclaimed the Professor. "What the devil will you find to say in thirty lectures! I say all that is necessary in six!"

Such was the teaching of that day. It is within the recollection of many of us, that attendance on obstetrics was not required for graduation in that school, even while Dr. James was Professor of the subject; and it is comparatively but a few years since the Institutes were taught as a distinct branch.

I do not stand here as the advocate, much less the apologist, of the schools of the present day. That would be a gratuitous task. But I do protest, as an humble member of our maligned profession, against this wholesale abuse of the medical men and medical institutions of the country. There may be, and probably are, chartered medical schools, which are justly obnoxious to all the charges that have been alleged; but they are few, and may easily be recognized. The wonder is, that under our political organization they are not more numerous. But why not discrimi-



nate, where discrimination is so easy, and not by one fell swoop engulf the whole?

Is the petty school, in an obscure village, where a professor lectures three or four hours a day for three or four weeks, in the hot summer season, without coat, cravat, or vest, the sweat running into his slippers the while, surrounded by twenty or thirty students, equally rude, smoking pipes and cigars to stifle the stench issuing from a putrid subject\*—is such a school to be compared and classed with any of the well-conducted medical colleges of our country? Is there any truth or justice in quoting the doings of the one as applicable to the others?

Of those who have indulged in this wholesale denunciation, how many have been prompted by disappointed vanity it would be needless to inquire. Alone, they would be too insignificant to merit notice; but mixed up with the many ingenuous and honest-hearted, who are sincerely desirous of promoting the honor and respectability of the profession, they are enabled to play the part of agitators, and thus acquire a little notoriety. In *their* mouths, reform means just what it does in politics—“*rotation in office*”—“*turn out the inns, and put in the outs.*”

For the welfare of the profession, and the promotion of its great ends, it is not *change*, but *improvement* that is wanted; and improvement, both in the science and the art, as well as in the modes of instruction, is continually going on.

I will not say, that the agitation of the subject of medical education, which has occurred within the last few years, has been productive of no good; but I am entirely of opinion, that the ridicule and vituperation, which have been indulged in towards the schools and the profession at large, have occasioned more than their counterpart of evil. When we announce, as was done on a certain public occasion, by one then high in position, that “*the profession is corrupt and degraded,*” it would be strange if among our fellow-citizens there should not be some believers; and when the colleges are indiscriminately denounced as mere bazaars for the sale of diplomas, is it any wonder that the people should take us at our word, and institute others on different principles? If there

\* This scene is derived from a gentleman who was at the time *too intimately concerned* in what passed to be mistaken.



has been a single instance of an objectionable school being put down by these means, or in any degree shorn of its powers for evil, I do not know it; while it is undeniable that some of the most unequivocally obnoxious have been instituted by public authority during this time; such, for instance, as the "*Eclectic*," "*the Homœopathic*," and "*the Female Medical College*" of this city; without mentioning others, in various parts of the country, little if at all less objectionable. If consecutive events are to be regarded as bearing any relation as cause and effect, then it is to be feared that the evils, which have followed from the course pursued, largely preponderate over the good.

Are we, then, to give up the matter in despair? Not at all. Medical education is a subject far too important to be neglected—to be left to the disappointed and querulous, or to the unenlightened multitude. It never has been neglected in this country, since the institution of the first Medical College. There has been a regular and progressive improvement. The modes and the means of instruction in our best schools, twenty years ago, greatly surpassed what existed twenty years previously, and none could compare twenty years since with what we witness now. But this improvement has proceeded from the efforts of no galvanized advocates. It has been steady and gradual; not the result of excitements or of *coup d'états*. It has been effected by natural causes, and the silent working of intelligent minds.

As the science has been unfolded and its boundaries enlarged, the necessity for additional means of instruction has been manifested, and the kindred sciences have lent their aid for the purpose. Whilst the higher intelligence of the people has demanded a better educated profession, competition among teachers has stimulated them to greater efforts for the attainment of this end.

I have told you something of the courses of instruction in my Alma Mater, in the early and middle periods of her career—periods than which none in her history have been brighter. And now I will mention what was the condition of teaching in the College of Physicians and Surgeons of New York, then the great and only formidable rival of the University of our own city.

I have in my possession a Circular, purporting to be issued by



the Trustees, and dated at New York, January 28, 1817 (not quite thirty-five years ago), signed, too, by one of the then professors, and latterly one of the most active of those engaged in denouncing the present systems of instruction. According to this "Circular," anatomy, physiology, and surgery were taught by one professor, in one lecture a day, during four months; that is, the course of instruction on each of these branches was comprised in two weekly lectures, of one hour each, or in about thirty-two lectures. It is true, there was another professorship of the "Principles and Practice of Surgery," and likewise a professorship of the "Institutes of Medicine;" but how their labors were divided, we are not informed. Obstetrics and the Diseases of Women and Children were taught in two lectures a week, delivered in the afternoon, as a sort of relaxation, (not always indulged in, however,) by the professor who discoursed an hour in the forenoon on the Theory and Practice of Medicine. Notwithstanding this brief period assigned to a most important practical branch, an hour of every day in the week was devoted to such collateral subjects as "Natural History, including Mineralogy, Botany, and Zoology." The whole scheme, in fact, bears evidence that the appointments were made to suit the men, rather than the men to suit the purposes of a well-devised system of medical instruction.

"From the provision thus made," proceeds the "Circular," "it will be seen, that the various courses of lectures, delivered in the college, are so arranged as to constitute a complete system of medical education;" and it is furthermore alleged that "the advantages enjoyed by the college" were "at least equal to those of any similar establishment in the United States."

This exhibits to us what was *then* considered "to constitute a complete system of medical education."

On the subject of graduation, among the requisites mentioned, not a word is said of Latin, or Greek, or English, or, indeed, of any preparatory education at all. Neither is any length of study prescribed; and it is distinctly stated, that attendance on lectures was not "indispensably necessary for graduation," leaving it to the option of the candidate to attend lectures or not, according to his pleasure.



In the means provided by the colleges of that day for illustrating the subjects taught in the lectures, the same spirit of economy prevailed.\*

Let any one look into the larger schools of the present day, and compare the courses of instruction in them, and the ample means provided for illustration, with what has been disclosed, and he will find that, maugre all that has been said and written on the subject, their advance has kept pace with the country and the age.

A tree, we are told, must be judged by the fruit which it bears. Let our American colleges and American physicians be tried by this test, and we shall have nothing to blush for. In no portion of the world are the physicians more skilful in the practice of their art than the members of the regular profession in the United States; nor is there a place where the great and benevolent objects of our profession are more nobly carried out.

It is the utilitarian character of the American mind that most distinguishes it from all others. Without much fondness for recondite subjects, or the ingenious speculations of dreamy philosophers, our people have a keen perception of whatever ministers to the comforts and convenience of the species, and a power of adaptation of which the world can afford no equal. American medical teachers and practitioners share this characteristic in common with their countrymen. In our schools, whatever is attempted is as clearly and as forcibly taught as in the most renowned transatlantic universities; whilst in our hospitals and in private practice, as noble achievements of science and art are displayed as the world can exhibit.

If we would elevate the medical profession, we must cease to slander it, by proclaiming it as corrupt and degraded, and desist from calumniating its fountains of learning. Lessen the respect of the members for its honor and usefulness, and you destroy all incentive to exertion for these objects. My creed on this point

\* The eminent schools to which I have particularly referred, were undoubtedly the best that existed in the country at the time, and may properly be cited as the most favorable examples of medical teaching some thirty or forty years ago. In common with their juniors, their means of instruction—it need hardly be said—are much improved since that date.



was adopted when I first entered the portals of the profession; my practice, I trust, has ever been conformable to it, and I expect to live and to die in the same faith. Yes, my young friends, let us, with filial fondness, ever honor our profession! I would as soon cast reproaches on the mother who gave me birth, as upon the profession which, like a second parent, received me into its bosom, and has never ceased to cherish, protect, and honor me! If this spirit animated the minds of all its members, we should hear no more about its being corrupt and degraded. There would be no running after *isms* and *pathies*; there would no longer be seen the names of physicians occupying high places, attesting the wonderful cures of pills and panaceas, filling the columns of newspapers, and enwrapping the boxes and bottles of the vile nostrums sent forth to defraud the unsuspecting multitude. I consider it to be the absolute duty of every physician to speak in respectful terms of the profession, and of all its honorable members, at all times and in all places, and to regard attacks upon the character of the one or the other as he would assaults upon the honor of his own household. By such a course, he will do much to secure for himself and the profession the esteem of the community, and in cultivating his own respect for it greatly contribute to render its burdens lighter and his enjoyments purer and more enduring.

In medical education, the first great lesson to be learned, therefore, is respect for the profession, founded on a just appreciation of its humane and noble objects. The man who properly comprehends and adopts the spirit of this lesson will be profoundly sensible of the serious obligations he assumes when engaging in the cause. He will discover that extensive and varied knowledge is requisite to fit him for their discharge, and that there is a moral training of the mind, scarcely less necessary for the physician than the intellectual endowments admitted by all to be essential. The great obstacle to sound and thorough medical education with which we have to contend in this country, is the want of a proper preparatory education on the part of a large proportion of those who aspire to become physicians. At first view, it would seem an easy matter to remove this impediment; but it is not so. It has been proposed by some, who have not considered



the matter very profoundly, that, to correct the evil, it is only necessary for the colleges to refuse to admit to their lectures all who do not produce proper evidence of qualification in this respect. This, if it were practicable, which is doubtful, might diminish the number of educated physicians, but there is no reason to believe that it would lessen the number of practitioners; and no one can pretend that this would be an improvement. The difficulties which environ the subject are greater than is generally imagined, and several of them are of a nature not speedily to be removed. Some of these may be briefly noticed; two in particular—the recent settlement of the country, and the sparseness of its population.

Large tracts of land are annually brought for the first time into cultivation; consequently, very extensive portions of our country have been peopled only within a few years. The hardy pioneers find their means abundantly taxed to clear their lands, erect necessary buildings, and provide food and raiment for themselves and families, without looking to things less immediately essential to comfortable existence. This, with the sparseness of the population, renders it quite impossible that the children in such districts can be very thoroughly educated, if their parents were sufficiently educated themselves to appreciate these advantages, which they seldom are. And yet, such people are subject to sickness and accidents, and instinctively seek for relief; and where suffering exists, it is not more natural for those who are afflicted to solicit assistance, than it is that there shall be some to whom they may address themselves, who will provide the means of relief demanded by such necessities.

So long, therefore, as extensive portions of our country are in the condition described, we cannot have a highly educated population; and it would be preposterous to expect, that those who enter the liberal professions can be, in our young and thinly settled country, as highly educated as those of like pursuits in old, wealthy, and crowded communities.

When our condition approximates to that of the countries of Europe in other respects, then we may expect to compare with them in our educational advantages, and not till then. All attempts to hasten this, as it relates to the profession, by coercive



measures, under our free institutions, cannot succeed, however well-meant the efforts. The wants of the people will give direction to public opinion, and with us public opinion is omnipotent. The laws of the land, which are but the expression of public opinion, allow every man to choose his own occupation, and concede to all the right to employ, with few exceptions, the artisan or the professional man, according to their judgment or their fancy. To have a highly educated profession, therefore, it is obvious that we must have a highly educated people for its constituents.

Great injustice has been done us by the comparisons which have been instituted between the profession in the United States and that of Europe; and even in the remarks I have made this evening, too much is conceded. Take, for example, France and England. In these countries, we find many learned and able physicians and surgeons, undoubtedly; but they by no means represent the mass.

In France, the practice of the healing art, outside of the hospitals and large cities, is, to a great extent, in the hands of the *Officiers de Santé*; a class with which it would be unjust and degrading to compare American physicians.

In England, the picture of medical teaching and licensing, as drawn by one of their own writers and most accomplished surgeons, Mr. Wilde, is certainly nothing to boast of. "In England," he remarks, "with few exceptions (and even in those exceptions the kind of instruction is very meagre), there is little or no preparatory education required by the different colleges and licensing bodies. The student is at perfect liberty to choose what lectures, or how many, he will first attend; the object being not how he can best prepare his mind, by initiatory degrees, for the more mature branches of study, but how he can soonest, easiest, and cheapest, become possessed of the *certificates of attendance* on the lectures he has never heard. There are no tests required as to his knowledge of any of the subjects he is *supposed* to study till the hour of his examination; and when this examination does arrive, the chances that he is never asked a question, except upon anatomy and surgery, and a little physiology, are, in the chief licensing institutions of Great Britain, so slight as almost to



amount to a certainty." So we see, after all, that in this country we are quite on a level with our transatlantic brethren.

Although we cannot always prevent illiterate and unprincipled men from offering their services to the people as medical advisers, we can still do something for the cause of sound medical education by refusing to such all attestations of merit, and resolutely declining to affiliate with them, leaving to the ignorant and wrong-thinking individuals who employ them the whole responsibility.

I desire not to be understood as intending, by any remarks I have made, to undervalue the benefits of a good preparatory education to the student of medicine; on the contrary, I regard such a preparation as of the greatest importance, not only on account of what is learned, but for the sake of the mental discipline which accompanies the task.

What is meant by a proper preparatory education for a physician, however, is not always understood, or, at least, the expression is differently interpreted by different people. Some would make it to consist, in a great measure, of philology; others, chiefly in a knowledge of physics; a third would combine both: whilst others, again, would insist on the highest range of classical attainments. The resolution reported by the Committee of the American Medical Association on this subject, and adopted by that body, is in the following words: "*Resolved*, That this Convention earnestly recommends to members of the medical profession throughout the United States, to satisfy themselves, either by personal inquiry or written certificate of competent persons, before receiving young men into their offices as students, that they are of good moral character, and that they have acquired a good English education, a knowledge of Natural Philosophy and the Elementary Mathematical Sciences, including Geometry and Algebra; and such an acquaintance, at least, with the Latin and Greek languages as will enable them to appreciate the technical language of medicine, and to read and write prescriptions."

This, certainly, is not a very high standard of education; and yet, how many not only commence the study of medicine, but advance to the doctorate, whose attainments fall short of even this meagre outline. Whose is the fault? I have already pointed



out the general causes, proceeding from the peculiar condition of the country, which impede education.

Notwithstanding these opposing circumstances, however, there can be no question that it is in the power of every young man possessed of the energy and enthusiasm of character which are necessary for great usefulness in the medical profession, to arrive at a much higher standard than has been indicated. Medical biography abounds with proofs of this. Why, then, is there so much short-coming in the matter? The fault, in a majority of instances, lies at the door of the private preceptor. If every physician, when a young man applies to enter his office, would obey the recommendation of the American Medical Association, by inquiring into the fitness of the applicant, moral and educational, and honestly advise him of the pre-requisites, the right-minded would be induced to adopt the proper course, and qualify himself for entering upon the study, while the indolent dolt, who never learns more of medicine than will enable him to become an empiric, would be thrust back into his proper sphere.

Instead of this frank and friendly course, how often do we witness cases in which gentlemen—sometimes themselves well educated—after taking the fees and occupying the time of their students, without either apprising them of their deficiencies or aiding them to overcome them, send them to the colleges to attend lectures and take their degrees; and then, to cap the climax, turn round and abuse the schools for admitting them!

When students present themselves under such circumstances, what is the duty of a Medical College? To fling them back without a trial, after spending their precious time and limited means, to seek fame and fortune in some more liberal and open avenue? How many illustrious names adorn the history of our science, although the early career of those who bore them was not more auspicious than these! And who can tell that, among the bashful, half-educated youth of the present day, there may not be a Godman struggling forth; or among the mechanics, but yesterday from the workshop, Hunters or Velpeaus, whose future labors will give lustre to science, and confer honor upon the American name!



The duty of the colleges is plain. It is consistent with justice, and in accordance with our free institutions. To the private preceptor belongs the responsibility of inducing the incompetent and unprepared to engage in the study of medicine. He is his own master, and can decline whom he pleases. The colleges are the creatures of law, and are governed by agents of the law, for the good of the whole community. To admit to the benefit of their teaching those whose wealth has given them many advantages, and refuse instruction to others less favored of fortune, would conflict with the spirit and objects of their institution. It is the manifest duty, therefore, of these institutions, to receive and instruct all who are legally entitled to demand admittance into their halls, and, after examination, to testify to the merits of those entitled to distinction, and withhold such attestation from such as have shown themselves to be undeserving of it. To withhold in the one case would be to deny the just rights of the citizen; to yield in the other, would be a fraud upon the public.

If, among those I have now the honor to address, there be any whose primary education has been neglected; who feel no particular partiality for medicine; who affect not the midnight lamp, and prefer present ease to future usefulness and renown, let them abandon the pursuit at once and forever. But they who would be men "of letters, manners, morals, parts;" who shrink from idleness, and in whose vocabulary "there is no such word as fail;" let these take courage; let them set a high mark before them, and press forward to it with unfaltering step, and success will be certain. During your studentship, as well as afterwards, you should have no hours of idleness, although you will have plenty of leisure—hours of relaxation from severer studies, which, if rightly employed, will supply the deficiencies of early education, without in the least retarding your professional studies. These intervals of ordinary employment occur to every one. Constant and intense application of the mind, without change or relaxation, cannot be endured. The bent bow must sometimes be unstrung, or its strength and elasticity will be destroyed.



“With curious art, the brain, too finely wrought,  
Preys on herself, and is destroyed by thought;  
Constant attention wears the active mind,  
Blots out her powers, and leaves a blank behind.”

It is the remark of an eloquent writer and most accomplished scholar, that “every one needs some relaxation or amusement, and experience has found that the best relief for the mind is not idleness, but change of occupation.”

This is the true key to success in all literary and scientific pursuits. Unceasing application to one object fatigues the mind, and not seldom leads to its overthrow. How many noble minds have sunk in darkness, urged on by enthusiasm for a favorite object beyond the powers of human endurance! One cannot read the history of such men as Henry Kirke White without the most melancholy feelings. Of him it was beautifully said:—

“Unhappy White! while life was in its spring,  
And thy young muse just waved her joyous wing,  
The spoiler came, and all thy promise fair  
Has sought the grave, to sleep for ever there.  
Oh! what a noble heart was here undone,  
When Science’ self destroy’d her favorite son!  
Yes! she too much indulg’d thy fond pursuit,  
She sow’d the seeds, but Death has reap’d the fruit.  
’Twas thine own genius gave the final blow,  
And help’d to plant the wound that laid thee low:  
So the struck eagle, stretch’d upon the plain,  
No more through rolling clouds to soar again,  
View’d his own feather on the fatal dart,  
And wing’d the shaft that quiver’d in his heart:  
Keen were his pangs, but keener far to feel  
He nurs’d the pinion which impell’d the steel,  
While the same plumage that had warm’d his nest  
Drank the last life-drop of his bleeding breast.”

Too often is this the fate of genius; “of that generous temper which knows nothing of the baseness of mankind, unsatisfied, and raging with a devouring eagerness for the aliment it has not yet found; to perfect some glorious design, to charm the world, or make it happier.”

Although I cannot counsel you to the severe and undivided attention to a single object of pursuit which leads to the develop-



ment of genius, I do strongly advise you to habits of industry—that “*diligentia singularis*,” without which, success in any great aim is impossible. The industrious man always has the most leisure. It is he who wastes time, like the spendthrift, that is most pinched for even that which is necessary for ordinary purposes. An economical employment of your time will allow you ample opportunity for the prosecution of every auxiliary and collateral object, without trenching upon that which should be given to medicine; and it is on this right use of time, that your success as men and physicians will chiefly depend.

To appropriate your time profitably, it is indispensably necessary for you to adopt some scheme, embracing the objects to which your attention shall be directed, and the time to be allotted to each, and eschew, as far as possible, everything else that may divide your time or occupy your thoughts. It is wonderful, if we are not careful, how we are robbed of that most precious of our gifts. There seems no chance to avoid this but by seclusion; and hence we find, that the achievements of great authors have sprung from the closet—none, certainly, from the drawing-room. It is said of Michael Angelo, that, whenever he was meditating on some great design, he closed himself up from the world. “Why do you lead so solitary a life?” asked a friend. “Art,” replied the sublime artist: “Art is a jealous god; it requires the whole and entire man.” It is not every one who has the bluntness to speak out on this subject like Baxter. When certain parties who called on him, attempted to apologize by saying: “We are afraid that we break in upon your time”—“To be sure you do,” said he. There are so many intruders who have “affixed no other value to time than that of getting rid of it,” that it requires some nerve to resist their assaults. It is well to remember the declaration, so apposite to this point, that “no considerable work was ever composed, but its author, like an ancient magician, first retired to the grove, or to the closet, to invoke.”

Some are apt to conclude that this seclusion from the attractions and distractions of society, is only feasible in the country. But it is not so. The philosopher Descartes, in writing to a friend from Amsterdam, uses this language: “You wish to retire; and your intention is to seek the solitude of the Chartreux,



or, possibly, some of the most beautiful provinces of France and Italy. I would rather advise you, if you wish to observe mankind, and at the same time to lose yourself in the deepest solitude, to join me in Amsterdam. I prefer this situation to that even of your delicious villa, where I spent so great a part of last year; for, however agreeable a country-house may be, a thousand little conveniences are wanted, which can only be found in a city. One is not alone so frequently in the country as one could wish: a number of impertinent visitors are continually besieging you. Here, as all the world, except myself, is occupied in commerce, it depends merely on myself to live unknown to the world. I walk every day amongst immense ranks of people, with as much tranquillity as you do in your green valleys. The men I meet with make the same impression on my mind as would the trees of your forests, or the flocks of sheep grazing on your common. The busy hum, too, of these merchants does not disturb one more than the purling of your brooks. If, sometimes, I amuse myself in contemplating their anxious motions, I receive the same pleasure which you do in observing those men who cultivate your land; for, I reflect that the end of all their labors is to embellish the city which I inhabit, and to anticipate all my wants."

Taking the same philosophic view of things, you will find few interruptions to your studies whilst in this large city, that are not, in a great measure, voluntary on your part; and you will be able to realize the condition so graphically described by the poet Rogers:—

"When, from his classic dreams, the student steals  
Amid the buzz of crowds, the whirl of wheels,  
To muse, unnoticed, while around him press  
The meteor-forms of equipage and dress;  
Alone, in wonder lost, he seems to stand  
A very stranger in his native land."